



# THE RESPONDER

TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE • JERRY PATTERSON, COMMISSIONER

OIL SPILL PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROGRAM • JUNE 2011



## Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Facility Opens in Port Aransas

**G**reg Pollock, deputy commissioner for the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program, represented the Texas General Land Office at the grand opening of the Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Port Aransas on March 22. The new center is part of the Animal Rehabilitation Keep, or ARK, at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute, which partners with the Land Office to save oiled wildlife.

Pollock joined Nueces County Judge Lloyd Neal and other local dignitaries to help cut the ribbon at the Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Center—the first in South Texas ready to help large numbers of oiled wildlife recover in the event of a significant spill.

“The upgrades to the ARK demonstrate that the partnership between the General Land Office, the University of Texas—Port Aransas and Valero produces results,” Pollock said. “All three organizations are committed to providing essential rehabilitation services to oiled wildlife.”

The Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Center is just one facility operated by the ARK, which has joined forces with the Land Office during moderate and small-scale responses to oiled wildlife.

In the event of a spill, the new facility will provide a place where trained personnel can clean oiled birds or other wildlife. A climate-controlled room with sinks and tables for handling and cleaning wildlife are key features of the facility. Another room will be used to let cleaned birds or other animals rest and recover.

The Gulf Coast supports large concentrations of wintering waterfowl and has an abundance of nesting waterfowl. An oil spill in this area could affect large numbers of protected migratory birds requiring many trained responders.



Ribbon-cutting ceremony. (L-R) Port Aransas Mayor Rick Pratt, Valero Senior Manager of Public Affairs Lillian Riojas, Valero Health, Safety, & Environmental Affairs Director Joe Almaraz, GLO Deputy Commissioner Greg Pollock, Nueces County Judge Lloyd Neal, UTMSI Director Dr. Lee Fuiman, and USCG Deputy Sector Commander Kathy Moore.

The Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Center will help ARK expand its normal operations. Between spills, the facility can be used for research and educational outreach efforts. Valero paid for the Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Center to increase ARK's oil spill response readiness through a Supplemental Environmental Project.

The main focus of ARK is to rescue and rehabilitate wildlife found sick or injured in the area adjacent to and including Mustang, San Jose and Padre islands, including the Mission-Aransas National Research Reserve, Corpus Christi Bay and the Upper Laguna Madre. The ARK was started in the early 1980s and now handles about 600 animals each year.

## Safflower Oil in the Brownsville Ship Channel

**O**n January 25th, the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Program received a notification of a spill in the Brownsville Ship Channel. A barge had been discharging safflower oil into an aboveground tank at the TransMontaigne Terminal. During the transfer an underground pipeline ruptured, discharging over 200 barrels of product onto land and into the ship channel. U.S. Coast Guard Station South Padre Island helped secure the site and Marine Safety Unit Brownsville helped oversee cleanup operations. Discharge Cleanup Organization RM Walsdorf, Inc. was contracted to clean the spill, and completed the project in 48 hours.

About 90 barrels of product were recovered, with 40 barrels being recovered from the water and the rest lost to evaporation, natural dissipation and leaching into the soil surrounding the spill location. Due to the immediate response by our local, federal and state entities the spill was cleaned safely and in an efficient manner.



Safflower oil contained along the shoreline of the Brownsville Ship Channel.

EDUCATE ♦ PREVENT ♦ RESPOND

# Gulf of Mexico PREP Exercise

**F**rom March 23-24, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Program, Aramco Services Company (ASC) and several other federal, state and local entities participated in a simulated response to a mock oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The Preparedness for Response Exercise Program (PREP) drill, sponsored by ASC at Port Royal Resort and Conference Center, involved approximately 150 people in a two-day exercise designed to test the readiness of responders and their ability to operate within the Incident Command System (ICS), as well as meet regulatory requirements for ASC.

The drill began March 9th with a simulated incident involving the release of 38,000 barrels of Arabian medium crude oil from the tanker "Antares Star" off the coast of Galveston. History shows that spills in this area tend to migrate south before making landfall, and the drill focused on days 14 and 15 of the simulated response. Training activities included a variety of scenarios requiring a coordinated effort among the Unified Command (UC) and Command Staff. "The Coast Guard participation in a full-scale exercise is critical in building relationships, testing plans, and addressing vulnerabilities in advance of a real-life incident and permits a more effective response in an actual event," said Captain Kathy Moore, Deputy Sector Commander, USCG Sector Corpus Christi.

Specific objectives of the drill were the ability to investigate the incident, establish a Joint Information Center (JIC), conduct proper notifications, coordinate mechanical recovery operations, and implement offshore, near shore, and onshore response strategies consistent with the National Contingency Plan (NCP) and Area Contingency Plan (ACP). "Drills are the cornerstone of preparedness," said Jay Veselka, Land Office Assistant Regional Director. "The GLO routinely conducts simulated spill response drills under PREP. As a participant in this drill, we tested our ability to respond to a simulated oil spill event, assisted in establishing a UC, and tested the ACP."



Unified Command Representatives participate in a mock press conference during the oil spill drill. Seated left to right: Wayne Hollingsworth, Incident Commander, Aramco Services Company; Capt. Kathy Moore, U.S. Coast Guard Deputy Sector Commander, Sector Corpus Christi; Jimmy Martinez, Regional Director, Texas General Land Office.

ASC conducts oil spill response training exercises rotating among the USCG COTP zones of Morgan City, La., Port Arthur, Houston-Galveston, and Corpus Christi. "Our annual oil spill response exercise is always an excellent opportunity to improve our readiness," said Wayne Hollingsworth, Incident Commander with ASC, based in Houston.

The drill ended with a hot wash session in which all participants were given an opportunity to address what went well and what needs more work. Earning special praise was the ability of private and public entities to work together to minimize the impact of a large scale spill while effectively communicating the UC message through the JIC. Land Office participants were commended for their professionalism, local knowledge, and ability to effectively respond while protecting the interests of the state.

## The Disappearing Oil Spill

**O**n February 8th, a spill was reported from the Motor Vessel *Omega Immanuel*. Advanced Response Officer (ARO) Robert Hadley was dispatched to investigate along with ARO Grey Powell and members of the U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit Texas City. The vessel was positioned in the Bolivar Roads area of the Galveston Bay entrance channel. Weather at the time of the incident was in the 40s with 20 to 30 knot winds and 3 to 4 foot seas. Upon arrival at the *Omega Immanuel* only a slight sheen was observed in the water with a few light spots of heavy fuel oil. At the time, the amount was determined to be about 200 liters, roughly 50 gallons, with possibly 20 gallons entering the water. Clean up was contained to the vessel.

On February 11, a report of tar balls was received in the vicinity of the Texas City dike. Senior Response Officer (SRO) Craig Kartye responded and the scattered tar balls were cleaned by Phoenix Pollution Control & Environmental Services, Inc. Samples were taken and sent to the USCG lab in New London, Conn., which determined they were a positive match to the *Omega Immanuel*. Four days later, heavy fuel oil was discovered in the San Leon area, on the rip rap, from G Street to I Street. SRO Craig Cook and Response Officer Candidates Kimberly Kackley and Susan Kelley responded to the scene with personnel from MSU Texas City.



Heavy fuel oil coats the riprap along the San Leon shoreline.

Cleanup operations began and samples were taken and sent to the USCG lab. These, too, came back as positive matches to the *Omega Immanuel*.

Clean up of the San Leon area took approximately two weeks with maintenance for another two weeks due to the difficulty of cleaning rip rap. Overall, it's estimated that 500 gallons were spilled by the *Omega Immanuel* on February 8th. This case was interesting in that the oil originally sank and was pushed about 18 miles to the north-northwest without being seen in a heavily traveled shipping lane.



# Company Continues Vessel Removals in South Texas

**T**he Land Office Derelict Vessel and Structure Program (DVS) is the first statewide initiative to systematically identify, prioritize, remove and dispose of abandoned vessels on the Texas coast. Since 2006, over 700 abandoned or derelict vessels have been identified. Over 470 of these vessels have since been removed without a dedicated funding stream. Although the state has no obligation to remove vessels, the Land Office continues to partner with conservation groups, other state and federal agencies, local navigation districts and harbor masters to remove sunken and abandoned vessels.



A 220 ft. by 40 ft. hopper barge controlled by XSR's push boat *Michael L.* is filled with derelict barge metal recovered from Aransas Pass. The barge is en route to Houston for metal recycling. When filled, the hopper barge can carry 600-700 tons of scrap metal.

Xtreme Scrap and Recycling (XSR) has removed 37 abandoned vessels in the Brownsville area and 38 in the Port Lavaca area at no cost to the state. The scrap metal processing and recycling company arrived in Corpus Christi in late November to remove 26 steel-hulled barges and one steel-hulled commercial fishing vessel. The abandoned vessels were scattered from Baffin Bay to Copano Bay. The company completed the task in one month, recovering about 2,275 tons of metal from Texas waters. Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program personnel were on-site to monitor ship-breaking activities, provide

spill response expertise and serve as liaison between stakeholders, interested parties and the public.

In 2010, XSR removed 101 derelict vessels—about 7,980 tons of metal—from coastal waters within the South Texas Coastal Zone (STCZ). The company keeps the metal it salvages as compensation for a job the state doesn't have the funding to undertake.

Numerous "legacy" wrecks, or vessels that have been abandoned for decades, are disappearing from the Texas coast. Abandoning or maintaining a derelict vessel in or on Texas coastal waters is illegal. However, the threat of new abandoned and derelict vessels continues due to the age of the state's fishing fleet, high fuel costs, high vessel removal costs, a decline in the seafood market, economic hardships, hurricane-generated impacts and boaters who live far from where their vessels are docked.

As a result, the DVS Program is always looking for new partnerships while continually expanding existing relationships. According to House Bill 2096, Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson may accept grants, gifts and donations of property, including real property, on behalf of the Coastal Protection Fund. If your organization or company has any questions about the program or would like to participate, please contact the DVS Program Coordinator, William "Bill" Grimes at 512-475-1464 or [william.grimes@glo.texas.gov](mailto:william.grimes@glo.texas.gov).



XSR uses a track hoe modified with a 300,000 lb. shear head and 70 ft. crane to cut a concrete-decked steel barge into more manageable pieces in Aransas Pass.

## Texas Represented on USCG's Deepwater Horizon Incident Specific Preparedness Review

**D**eputy Commissioner Greg Pollock of the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program was invited by U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Robert Papp to serve on the Incident Specific Preparedness Review (ISPR) of the Deepwater Horizon incident. Admiral Papp signed the charter on June 14, 2010, setting the review in motion, and the final report was released in March of this year.

Comprised of 14 members representing coastal states, federal agencies and non-governmental organizations, the ISPR team interviewed almost 100 individuals who were key players in some aspect of the Deepwater Horizon response. National Incident Commander Thad Allen, BP's Doug Suttles, USCG Rear Admiral

Mary Landry and Plaquemines Parish President Billy Nungesser were just a few of those interviewed. USCG Retired Vice-Admiral Roger Rufe chaired the review team and was assisted by USCG Retired Rear Admiral Carlton Moore.

Given the magnitude of the Deepwater Horizon incident, there is no shortage of recommendations for improvement. For the complete report go to [www.uscg.mil/foia/docs/DWH/BPDWH.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/foia/docs/DWH/BPDWH.pdf).

ISPRs are convened after significant pollution events and are designed to provide a comprehensive analysis of preparedness and response efforts. Only a handful of reviews have been conducted, with the *Cosco Busan* spill in San Francisco Bay the most recent before the Deepwater Horizon review.

# Hurricane and Flood Preparedness for Aboveground Storage Tanks: RRT-6 Recommended Best Practices

In 2005, hurricanes Katrina and Rita caused more than 10 major oil spills—over 100,000 gallons each—in coastal areas of Texas and Louisiana. Following these environmental impacts, the Regional Response Team-6 (RRT-6) Executive Committee charged the Science and Technology chair to form a committee to investigate these spills and make recommendations. Among the organizations represented in the committee were the Texas General Land Office, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Department of Energy, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinators Office and representatives from private industry.

The investigation revealed that nearly all Aboveground Storage Tanks (ASTs) failed due to one or more of three reasons: flooding, storm surge, and/or impact. Throughout the investigation no industrial standards for ASTs were found or stated. However, a couple of regulations and standards have passed since that time. The National Fire Protection Association now lists requirements for ASTs in areas subject to flooding. In addition, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has produced two publications addressing storage tank preparation during flood events: “Risk Management Series: Design for Improving School Safety in Earthquakes, Floods, and High Winds” and “Homeowner’s Guide to Retrofitting: Six Ways to Protect your Home from Flooding.” None of these regulations address exploration and/or production facilities or chemical plants and refineries.



This diesel storage tank had to be removed from a wildlife refuge area after Hurricane Rita's storm surge moved it more than 1.5 miles.

The number and types of forces that impact ASTs and associated ancillary piping differ between flood and storm surge events, but flotation has the greatest effect during both types of event. Once the external water level is equal to or greater than the product level inside the tank, the tank becomes buoyant. Industry representatives on the investigative committee emphasized that tank contents should be at least three to six feet above the actual water level to prevent flotation. The specific gravity of product in a tank can also determine whether flotation will occur.

The investigation also reviewed why some tanks survived these events. It was found that surviving tanks either had contents greater than the external water level or were anchored down. It was also found that full tanks are stronger than empty ones and better able to resist impacts from debris.

Committee members felt the best defense against flooding or storm surge is to have all tanks and ancillary piping anchored down, and to either empty tanks or fill them with water. Tanks prepared in this manner eliminate the risk of a discharge and won't become an impact object that causes spills from other sources. Facility Response Plans are necessary for facilities located in high-risk areas. These plans should outline specific risk factors and timelines in preparing ASTs for impacts from hurricanes and floods.

Note: All findings and recommendations listed herein are from RRT-6 and not the Land Office.



Storage tanks washed into the marsh at Cedar Point following Hurricane Ike.

## Vessel Compliance Numbers Improving

Since the June 2010 article on “Vessel Registration Requirements,” regional offices of the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program have seen a noticeable decrease in non-compliant vessels being identified. The decrease was observed during weekly monitoring of vessels operating in Texas coastal waters. Vessel owners and operators are doing an outstanding job submitting vessel-

specific information to the Land Office Oil Spill Program. While non-compliant vessels are still being found, the numbers are greatly reduced. The Land Office goal is to continue to work with the owners and operators to assist them with vessel requirements.

Great progress is being made and it's very much appreciated.



# 12th Annual Training Academy

**F**rom May 2-5 and May 9-12, the Holiday Inn and Suites in Beaumont was host to the 12th annual Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program Training Academy. The two-week Training Academy is a much anticipated event that helps Land Office staffers stay up to date on current issues inside and outside of Texas, as well as providing some hands-on training. Each four-day session was attended by one-half of the Oil Spill staff. Guest speakers from many facets of the oil spill response community were featured, as well as a field day in the Beaumont area.

Lessons learned from the MC-252 spill last summer were discussed in detail, including wildlife contingencies, alternative response technology, MSRC's operational support, Wild Well Control's source control support, Vessels of Opportunity and NRDA in Louisiana. Land Office Deputy Commissioner Greg Pollock spoke about his involvement in the Incident Specific Preparedness Review. Other presentations were given on the operational advantages of PortVision, Hurricane Modeling and Predictions, Natural Disaster Response and ESF-10, and budgetary concerns in the state of Texas. The academy field trip included a visit to Gator Country, where alligator rescuer and conservationist Gary Saurage demonstrated proper alligator handling and identification of



Week one Training Academy participants with Gary Saurage, owner of Gator Country and host of CMT's "Gator 911."

venomous snakes; a trip to the Texas Energy Museum for a lesson in petroleum production and processing by D. Ryan Smith of the Texas Energy Museum and Dr. James Westgate of Lamar University; and a demonstration of field techniques for bird deterrent. For more information on the Land Office Training Academy please contact William "Bill" Grimes at [william.grimes@glo.texas.gov](mailto:william.grimes@glo.texas.gov) or by phone at 512-475-1464.

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### Corpus Christi

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### Brownsville

2145 EMS Lane  
Brownsville, Texas  
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956-504-1417

### Port Lavaca

414 Travis Street  
Port Lavaca, Texas  
77979-2351  
361-552-8081

**Report oil spills  
1-800-832-8224  
24 hours**

The Responder is published by the Texas General Land Office. Questions and comments may be submitted to Maren Harding via email at [maren.harding@glo.texas.gov](mailto:maren.harding@glo.texas.gov) or by phone at 281-470-6597.

## Upcoming Events

### Information Transfer Meetings

August 9th

Brownsville

8 a.m. – Noon

Brownsville Fire Department  
Training Room

1855 Captain Foust Road

August 10th

Port Lavaca

9 a.m. – Noon

Bauer Exhibit Building  
Calhoun County Fairgrounds  
County Road 101

For more information on these events please contact Debbie Saenz at [debbie.saenz@glo.texas.gov](mailto:debbie.saenz@glo.texas.gov) or by phone at 512-475-1466.

### Clean Gulf 2011

will be held in San Antonio at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center from November 30-December 1.

Come out and celebrate the 20th anniversary of our program and hear experts speak about pressing environmental issues in the Gulf of Mexico. Visit [www.cleangulf.org](http://www.cleangulf.org), or contact Land Office

Outreach and Education Coordinator Debbie Saenz at [debbie.saenz@glo.texas.gov](mailto:debbie.saenz@glo.texas.gov) or by phone at 512-475-1466, or Event Planner Kayla Appelt at [kaylaa@tradefair.org](mailto:kaylaa@tradefair.org) or by phone at 713-343-1869.

## CORRECTION

In the Operation "Oily Bilge" article, which ran in the March 2011 edition, Sector Corpus Christi was inaccurately referred to as Marine Safety Office Corpus Christi. We apologize to our counterparts at Sector Corpus Christi and would like to thank them again for their assistance in this project and many others.